DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 168 TM 035 062

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TITLE	Dichotomous Pedagogies and the Promise of Comparative Research.
PUB DATE	2002-04-00
NOTE	16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 1-5, 2002).
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Comparative Analysis; Comparative Education; *Educational Research; *Educational Theories; *Elementary Secondary Education; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*Dichotomies

ABSTRACT

Naïve dichotomous representations of complex realities persist in part because there is unfilled political and conceptual space in which they can flourish. Dichotomous representations of pedagogy have been popular and linger even though more discerning educators have abandoned this kind of rhetoric. Comparative perspective might contribute to the development of a nondichotomizing pedagogy. In support of this position, three propositions are drawn from the author's own comparative research. Across cultures, one can find a recurrence of many more than two contrasting bedrock views of what teaching is about. As these viewpoints surface in different combinations, they extend the range of pedagogical orientations and possibilities. Beyond these are primordial values about the relationships of individuals to each other and two society that have a direct bearing on how teachers think and how they act. The identification of such values, value concordances, and dissonances in everyday classroom practice is greatly aided if there is a coherent model or framework for conceptualizing teaching itself. One way of breaking free of bipolar models of teaching is to devise frameworks for making sense of educational values and practices that make such bipolarity as difficult as possible. (Contains 36 endnotes.) (SLD)

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DICHOTOMOUS PEDAGOGIES AND THE PROMISE OF COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

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Paper presented at the 2002 AERA Annual Meeting in New Orleans.
Presidential Session III, 3 April:
Defamiliarising our Notions of Pedagogy and Curriculum:
getting beyond dichotomous notions of enquiry vs didactic instruction.

TM035062

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DICHOTOMOUS PEDAGOGIES AND THE PROMISE OF COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

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In 1981 Brian Simon, Britain's greatest educational historian, published an article with the quotably provocative title 'Why no pedagogy in England?' Simon insisted that unlike most countries of continental Europe England had developed no science of teaching worthy of the name, but instead had locked itself into rationales for classroom practice in which pragmatism might be sustained by a generalised ideology but there was no discernible grounding in principle. He traced the problem back, in part, to the Victorian public (i.e. private) school view that education should be concerned with 'character' rather than the intellect, a view which also kept the academic study of education firmly out of Britain's two oldest and most influential universities, Cambridge and Oxford, until the latter part of the twentieth century.[1] Though Simon readily acknowledged the impact of psychology on educational theory and research as these developed elsewhere, he did not concede - even when he re-visited his 'Why no pedagogy?' article in the 1990s [2] - that it or its cognate disciplines yet offered anything approaching the coherent pedagogy he could point to in other European countries. This was in part, too, because for much of the post-war period British educational psychology was deployed to buttress the prevailing doctrine of individualism, which frustrated Simon's agenda of a pedagogy of general principles, grounded in what children have in common and directed to the achievement of collective goals.[3]

The severity of Simon's stricture has challenged many UK researchers over the years, especially the growing number who have devoted their energies to studying learning, teaching and life in classrooms. In this sense, pedagogic research, if not a coherent and principled pedagogy, is now firmly established in England.

In 1995, while collecting data for a comparative study of primary education in England, France, India, Russia and the United States,[4] I found, prominently displayed on a Michigan classroom wall, this teaching manifesto:

> *Important issues to me –*
> Process orientation vs product orientation
> Teaching students vs teaching programs
> Teacher as facilitator vs teacher as manager
> Developing a set of strategies vs mastering a set of skills
> Celebrating approximation vs celebrating perfection
> Respecting individual growth vs fostering competition
> Capitalizing on student's strengths vs emphasising student's weaknesses
> Promoting independence in learning vs dependence on the teacher

It could as well have come from an English primary classroom during the 1960s-1980s heyday of Plowdenite progressivism, the American version of which was celebrated as 'open education'. I was

reminded of this manifesto, and of Simon's critique of what he deemed the unrealistic individualism and 'pedagogic romanticism' of the English progressive movement, when I heard that the title of this paper's AERA session was to be 'Getting beyond dichotomous notions of inquiry vs didactic instruction'. I also recalled Israel Scheffler's brilliant deconstruction of the slogans, shibboleths and metaphors which saturate this kind of discourse;[5] but recalled, too, the need – following Argyris and Schön's distinction between 'espoused theory' and 'theory-in use' – to understand its rhetorical function and distinguish between its public and private purposes.[6]

All very *déjà vu*, in fact. However, it must be acknowledged that such language may be nurtured by politicians and the press long after more discerning educators have abandoned it. In a context where political rhetoric is bounded by the atavism of us and them, the free and the oppressed, the chosen and the damned, to corral educational ideas and practices into the warring camps of 'traditional' and 'progressive' appeals not just to lazy minds but also to more alert calculations about how the world is best represented for the purposes of selling newspapers and winning elections. (One way of countering the downward slide of this oppositional discourse, I have found, is to replace the exclusive 'versus' in slogans like those illustrated above by an inclusive 'and'. That way you open a debate rather than close it. However, another frequently-observed elementary school poster – '101 ways to praise a child ... Wow! ... Nice job! ... You're cute ...' etc is less easily tackled, for its entire vocabulary blossoms from the belief that praise is the only kind of feedback which children need).

This session's title presumes that comparative educational enquiry, by stepping outside such localised ways of thinking and the histories which have made them all but impermeable, can offer a more rounded and coherent basis for reconceptualising curriculum and pedagogy. And at the very least, the session implies, a comparative perspective offers if not a conceptual solution then certainly alternative practices which, with any luck, will lodge themselves conspicuously and untidily between the poles of 'process' and 'product' or 'child-centred' and 'subject-centred'.

But we must also note that there are two senses in which comparative enquiry may actually feed the polarising tendency. First there is the ethnocentric risk of carrying local conceptualisations into the international arena – witness, for example, the opposition of 'ability' and 'effort' in discussions about Asian and American education, when in truth in different countries within these regions each of those terms, and indeed other pivotal educational concepts like 'development' and 'potential', let alone 'achievement', are culturally and linguistically charged in very specific ways.[7] Second, bipolarity is an inevitable hazard when just two countries are being compared. Even a three-country comparison risks what Tobin calls the 'Goldilocks effect' (this teaching is too formal, this teaching is too informal, but this teaching is just right; this system is too centralised, this one too decentralised ... and so on).[8] I chose to compare five countries, and so while I risked being superficial or just plain wrong over such a broad canvas I could at least avoid both pernicious dichotomies and Goldilocks.

But the problem reaches deeper than this of course. Naive dichotomous representations of complex realities persist in part because there is unfilled political and conceptual space in which they can flourish. People polarise either when it serves their personal or collective interests to deny the possibility of a middle ground, let alone of the kind of complexity for which even Goldilocks is inadequate, or when they know no other way. So, if the problem is as real here as the choice of this AERA session title suggests, dare we ask without risk of causing offence 'Why no pedagogy in the United States?' And if the implied proposition is admitted, then the reasons must be historical, cultural and political as well as conceptual. I leave others to address the matter of causality: I shall concentrate on the possibilities, drawing on comparative research, for attacking the problem empirically and conceptually.

Pedagogy I define as the discourse which attends the act of teaching. Teaching and pedagogy are not the same. Teaching is a practical and observable act. Pedagogy encompasses that act *together with* the purposes, values, ideas, assumptions, theories and beliefs which inform, shape and seek to justify it.

In acquiring this penumbra pedagogy also connects teaching with the wider culture. Hence the wide array of intellectual preoccupations which it provokes at AERA meetings and similar events: at one end the quasi-scientific minutiae of lesson structure, student grouping, time on task, opportunity to learn, IRF exchanges and all that follows from the everyday equating of 'pedagogy' with classroom processes and procedures; at the other end we find the grander questions of culture, structure, agency, policy and control, and the Bernsteinian notion of pedagogy as a 'relay' for the relations of class, gender, religion, region and above all power,[9] coming together tellingly in Freire's title *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.[10]

How can one begin to fill the conceptual space which this continuum signals, quite apart from addressing the concern behind the title of this AERA session? Many have been working for years to do the latter, at least. Indeed, to complain about the persistence of the old dichotomies is to run the risk of ignoring the by now considerable literature, both conceptual and empirical, on the art, or craft, or science, or (*pace* Gage) the science-of-the-art of teaching[11], not to mention the emergence of a literature which explicitly uses the term pedagogy itself, albeit sometimes – as in 'poisonous pedagogy'[12] - pejoratively.

In considering what a comparative perspective might offer to the development of a non-dichotomising pedagogy, I'd like to take three propositions from my own comparative research. First, across cultures one can find a recurrence of many more than two contrasting bedrock views of what teaching is all about, which by surfacing not in their pure form but in different combinations extend the range of pedagogical orientations and possibilities still further. Second, beyond these are primordial values about the relationship of individuals to each other and to society which have a direct bearing not just on how teachers think but on how they act. Third, the identification of such values, value concordances and dissonances in everyday classroom practice is greatly aided if we have a coherent framework or model for conceptualising teaching itself. In running briefly through each of these suggestions, I can of course only touch on ideas and findings which are developed and explored in much greater detail elsewhere.[13] In sum then, I'm proposing that one way of breaking free of bipolar models of teaching is to devise frameworks for making sense of educational values and practices which make such bipolarity as difficult as possible.

Conceptualising teaching

To start with the third proposition above. One of the challenges I faced when confronted with a large quantity of qualitative and quantitative data from schools and classrooms in five countries was to find frameworks which encouraged me to make sense of disparate data in ways which showed no obvious bias towards particular cultural contexts. Relatedly, I was interested in seeing how far I could tease out the universal or generic in teaching from the culturally-specific – an overweening ambition perhaps, but worth entertaining.

In the literature on culturally-located views and models of teaching, generalised 'Asian', 'Pacific Rim', 'Western', 'non-Western' and 'European' 'models' of teaching and learning feature prominently and perhaps over-confidently.[14] If we readily recognise that the geographical and cultural coverage of 'Asian' is simply too broad to have descriptive validity for the analysis of teaching, we should be no less aware of the hegemonic overtones of 'Western'. Does 'Western' encompass South as well as North America? Does it include some European countries while excluding others? With its implied validation of a particular worldview, tellingly captured since 2003 in the Old/New Europe name-

calling of the Bush administration, 'Western' may well exacerbate rather than supplant the pedagogy of opposition.

I also reminded myself of the many studies of teaching and classroom effectiveness, many of them within an acknowledged or tacit input-process-output paradigm, which seek to represent the whole as the sum of its myriad observable parts. For the absence of a genuinely holistic framework was one of the problems: we are good at dissecting and atomising teaching for the purposes of correlating the variables thereby revealed, but poor at reconstituting it as coherent and recognisable events located in time and space. Eventually, I built up a framework from two simple and irreducible propositions, the second an extension of the first:

- Teaching, in any setting, is the act of using method x to enable students to learn y.
- Teaching has structure and form; it is situated in and governed by, space, time and patterns of student organisation; and it is undertaken for a purpose.

These translated into a model containing three broad analytical categories – the immediate context or *frame* within the act of teaching is set, the *act* itself, and its *form* – and a set of elements within each such category. The core acts of teaching (*task, activity, interaction* and *judgement*) are framed by *space, student organisation, time* and *curriculum*, and by *routines, rules and rituals*. They are given form, and are bounded temporally and conceptually, by the *lesson* or teaching session. (See figure below).[15]

The next stage was to devise subsidiary analytical frameworks. For reasons of space these cannot be filled out in detail here: they are developed and applied in the full account of this research.[16] The framework enabled me to apply both quantitative and qualititative techniques to a mixture of fieldnotes, interview transcripts, videotapes and lesson transcripts, and to show how the different elements related to each other (or not).

A generic model of teaching

Frame	Form	Act
Space		Task
Student organisation		Activity
Time	Lesson	
Curriculum		Interaction
Routine, rule and ritual		Judgement

Versions of teaching

If pedagogy combines the act of teaching and its attendant discourses, then the explication of values and ideas will be essential to the process of making sense of observable practice. The *Five Cultures* research yielded, alongside the expected differences in the goals and orientations of the five education systems, differences no less marked in how schools and teachers were perceived, and how they perceived themselves.

At classroom level – the research offered three 'levels' of data and analysis, state, school and classroom – these differences can be grouped most obviously within six constellations of pedagogical values, or versions of teaching. [17]

1. Teaching as *transmission*
2. Teaching as *induction*

3. Teaching as *negotiation*
4. Teaching as *facilitation*
5. Teaching as *acceleration*
6. Teaching as *technology*

In a basic transmission model teachers see their task as passing on information, and it is to information rather than reflective understanding that knowledge tends to be reduced. In India, many of whose primary classrooms until recently illustrated an extreme version of transmission teaching - the data preceded the more reciprocal approaches encouraged by the reformist District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) - teachers responded with heavily reiterative interactions and lesson structures in order to move their forty or sixty pupils along, more or less, together. There was little opportunity for fine judgements about the proper balance of different kinds of learning task, since the spread of prior pupil attainment was so wide. Instead, rote served as a kind of cognitive blunderbuss which, if fired often enough, eventually had some kind of impact on the learning of most pupils, if not all of them. The pre-DPEP Indian classrooms, though, represented an extreme case but not a unique one. In fact, transmission teaching is ubiquitous, not just as a matter of historical memory and habit, but because there are undoubtedly circumstances in which the transmission of information and skill is a defensible objective, in any context.

Disciplinary induction elevates knowledge from information to something which is both a cultural good (in Matthew Arnold's much quoted and abused phrase 'the best that has been thought and said') and is seen to confer powers of intellectual precision, agility and discrimination. It is usually associated with expository and recitation teaching - as, typically, in our French data - but also with a high degree of structured and sometimes argumentative talk, for the essence of the discipline is that it is a living paradigm for making sense of the world rather than an inert bundle of facts.

Democratic pedagogy (teaching as negotiation) continues to retain its hold on the thinking of many American and English teachers, though few of the latter may have heard of John Dewey, its progenitor. It also flowered briefly in the Soviet Union during the 1920s period of educational experimentation. Democratic pedagogy rejects the traditional domination-subordination relationship between teacher and taught, makes knowledge reflexive rather than disciplinary, the child an active agent in his or her learning, and the classroom a workshop or laboratory. In all these respects the classroom seeks to enact the ideals of the wider democratic society. Negotiation thus stands in conscious antithesis to both transmission and induction.

Developmental facilitation and its adjunct 'readiness' are key concepts in the western progressive movement, and they connote the Rousseauesque principle that children have their own ways of thinking, seeing and feeling, the Piagetian idea that children go through the same stages of development but at different rates, Froebel's use of organic imagery and the metaphor of growth, and the presumed corollary of all these that children must not be 'pushed' and will learn only when they are 'ready'. The teacher's task therefore becomes facilitation rather than direction. In England, this idea reached its apogee in the 1960s and 1970s, following the publication of the Plowden report, and in the United States it remains influential long after the demise of 'open education', where it is usually authenticated by reference to Piaget rather than Rousseau or Froebel.

Acceleration derives from Vygotsky's famous maxim that 'the only good teaching is that which outpaces development'[18] and is diametrically opposed to the principle of readiness. When one combines this with the arguments of Vygotsky, Luria and their fellows about the critical role of language in learning, the teaching imperative is clear: the momentum of a lesson must be secured and maintained, it must drive forward, and its engine is what in the *Five Cultures* project we came to call a proper balance of 'interactive' and 'semantic' (or 'cognitive') pace.[19] Acceleration is as anthithetical to

developmental readiness / facilitation as democratic pedagogy is to transmission and disciplinary induction.

Finally, the idea that teaching is first and foremost a technology, guided by principles of structure, economy, conciseness and rapidity, and implemented through standardised procedures and materials, reaches back to a much older central European tradition. These principles were first adumbrated by Jan Kamensky (Comenius) in his *Great Didactic* in 1632, and they found their way to Russia and much of eastern and central Europe via Bohemia and Germany. In these countries, long before the emergence of modern psychology, there was a prior commitment to economy and pace in teaching, and this fitted as well with the later theories of Vygotsky as, in the contrary tradition, Piaget complemented the earlier ideas of Rousseau.

With this last version I follow Simon in claiming that there is a distinctly continental European pedagogic tradition. In my own data, the cultural divide in 'western' pedagogy seemed to be the narrow stretch of water separating France from England rather than the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean. There was a discernible Anglo-American nexus of pedagogical values and practices centring on developmentalism and democratic pedagogy, just as there was a discernibly continental European one rooted in the Comenian tradition, with Russia at one highly formalised extreme combining Comenian structure, graduation and pace with Vygotskian acceleration, and France – procedurally more eclectic and less ritualised, but firmly grounded in epistemic structure and the cultural primacy of *les disciplines* - at the other.[20] India's pedagogy was both Asian and European, as its history would suggest: an amalgam of Brahmanic, colonialist and post-Independence traditions and values.

This, of course, cannot be the whole story. Comparative pedagogical analysis reveals, alongside the obvious national differences, a subtle shading of commonality and variation which reflects the international trade in educational ideas which preceded globalisation by many centuries. It also shows how ideas are domesticated and indeed recreated as they cross national borders, so that, for example, Prussian and American Herbartianism ended up rather different from each other, and different again from Herbart's initial adaptation of the Pestalozzian idea of *Anschauung*.[21] In the same way, more recently, it is interesting to see how Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective has, in Britain, been reconfigured with its cultural and historical elements played down, to generate a pedagogy closer to the dominant individualism.

Further - it goes without saying but it should perhaps be said anyway – the six versions of teaching adumbrated here constitute a continuum of tendencies and not a set of discrete national descriptors.

Primordial values

Buttressing these specifically pedagogical positions are three primordial values - *individualism, community* and *collectivism* - which are concerned with that most fundamental human question, the relationship of humans to each other and to the communities and societies they inhabit. These are familiar enough in social and political theory, though less so in accounts of pedagogy.

Within the classroom a commitment to *individualism* manifests itself in an emphasis on freedom of choice, individualised learning tasks, diverging rather than uniform learning outcomes, and a view of knowledge as personal and unique rather than imposed from above in the form of disciplines. *Community* is reflected in an emphasis on collaborative learning, often in small groups, in the concern given to developing a climate of caring and sharing rather than competing, and indeed in an emphasis on the affective rather than the cognitive. *Collectivism* is reflected in common knowledge, common ideals, a single curriculum for all, an emphasis on national culture rather than pluralism and multiculture, and on learning together as a class rather than in isolation or in small groups.

In the 'five cultures' data these values were highly pervasive at both school and classroom levels, and could be traced right through to patterns of teaching and classroom organisation, in which context it seems to me not at all accidental that so much discussion of teaching methods should have centred on the relative merits of whole class teaching, group and individual work. In France this debate can be traced back to arguments at start of the nineteenth century about the relative merits of *l'enseignement simultané*, *l'enseignement mutuel* and *l'enseignement individuel*.[22] As a post-revolutionary instrument for fostering civic commitment and national identity as well as literacy, *l'enseignement simultané* won. Only recently, in conjunction with the decentralising movement of the 1980s and the rising tide of individualism, has its hegemony begun to be questioned.

Individualism, community and collectivism are - as child, group and class - the organisational nodes of pedagogy because they are the social and indeed political nodes of human relations. Compare this, for example, with Shweder's contrast of 'holistic, sociocentric' cultures like India, and what he terms 'Western' cultures with their concept of 'the autonomous distinctive individual living in society'.[23] Note too the American survey that found that only Britain was within striking distance of American respondents' insistence that freedom is far more important than equality and that personal welfare far outweighs responsibility to society (German respondents voted a balance of both sets of commitments).[24] Or even consider the cultural conditions which make it possible for a British head of government to assert, as Margaret Thatcher famously did during her period of Reagonite infatuation, that 'there's no such thing as society: there are only individual men and women, and there are families'. Such a sentiment would be inconceivable in France or Russia. But in the United States, there's much talk of nation, less of society: an important distinction. Britain, being a still muddled historical confection of rampant England and suppressed Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, finds it difficult to conceive of either.

However, divorcing teaching as technique from the discourse of pedagogy as we so often do, we may have failed to understand that such core values and value-conflicts pervade social relations inside the classroom no less than outside it; and hence we may have failed to understand why it is that undifferentiated learning, whole class teaching and the principle of bringing the whole class along together 'fit' more successfully in many other cultures than they do in England or the United States, and why teachers in these two countries regard this pedagogical formula with such suspicion. For individualism and collectivism arise inside the classroom not as a clinical choice between alternative teaching strategies so much as a value-dilemma which may be fundamental to a society's history and culture.

I should add that as the six versions of teaching and the three primordial values emerged from data collected in England, France, India, Russia and the United States, a comparable study in other countries might well yield additional versions of teaching, and weaken still further the hegemony of Anglo-American pedagogical dichotomies of the kind which prompted a group of AERA members to propose the symposium to which this paper contributed. Indeed, Jin Li's study of American and Chinese beliefs appears to do just that. She contrasts American students' view of knowledge as 'out there', set apart from the learner and available to be willingly or unwillingly acquired, with the Chinese view which sees knowledge as integral to what it means to be a person. By this view socialisation, education, knowledge and morality are inseparable. And especially pertinent to our starting-point of dichotomous pedagogy, and indeed to the particular dichotomies illustrated earlier, she comments: 'These different construals of knowledge may be one reason why there are so many US concepts referring to mental processes on the one hand and the external body of school subjects on the other.'[25]

Discussion

Let us return to the hypothesis that the persistence of a dualist teaching discourse can be weakened by the introduction of pluralist frameworks for conceptualising the act of teaching and its informing values, and that comparative study may open the door to these.

The first consequence of this approach is that we find that the existing discourse, and the associated practice, are considerably more complex than this session's title or those 'process vs product' slogans suggest. In this matter, though I find Stigler's and Hiebert's idea of culturally-rooted 'teaching scripts', which they apply to the TIMSS and TIMSS-R video data, immensely suggestive, I believe that it underplays the dissonances which these contain, certainly in the United States.[26] For though our Michigan teachers had recourse to what Stigler and Hiebert call the culturally-evolved 'core beliefs' about knowledge, learning and teaching, their interviews and our classroom observation told a different story. There we found not the coherence of 'teaching scripts ... consistent with the stable web of beliefs and assumptions that are part of the culture'[27], nor the purity of that either/or polarisation with which we started, but contradictory thinking and mixed messages.

The 'teaching scripts' hypothesis prompts other reservations. It ignores the gap between teachers' espoused theory and their theory-in-use, or the public and private languages of teaching, and it reduces the complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and observable practice to a simple linear one when in truth teaching is more about compromise and the imperfect reconciliation of competing imperatives than the implementation of ideals.

More fundamentally, the 'teaching script' is ahistorical. Educational ideas and practices reflect a long process of accretion and sedimentation, or hybridisation, and the past (and its tensions and contradictions) is always observable within the present.[28] This is another reason why dichotomies are so unsatisfactory, for there is a sense in which education is – if we must use these terms – at the same time both 'traditional' and 'progressive'. Thus, contemporary English primary education displays the simultaneous residues of (i) 19th century mass elementary education (the 'cheap but efficient' class teacher system, the dominance of curriculum 'basics' defined as reading, writing and number), and (ii) the 1960s progressive backlash (small groups, affectivity, the visual environment, resistance to the hegemony of the 'basics'), alongside (iii) the current neo-elementary rubric of the government's 'standards' strategies in literacy and numeracy.[29]

Further, the 'teaching script' idea is conceptually and empirically weak, for in terms of our earlier model of teaching it penetrates so far into teaching but no further: it contents itself, that is to say, with certain aspects of pedagogical 'frame' and 'form' but not with the deeper layers of the teaching 'act', notably the exchange and negotiation of meanings through teacher-student discourse. Once one reaches that layer of teaching the script idea begins to break down. In any case, no script is merely read: it is interpreted, misread and in other ways re-created (always assuming that it is readable in the first place).

For if we take our three primordial values of individualism, community and collectivism, the scenario is not one of singularity. Human consciousness and human relations involve the interplay of all three values and though one may be dominant, they may in reality all be present and co-exist in uneasy and unresolved tension. Nowhere was this tension more evident than in the United States, where we found teachers seeking to reconcile - and indeed to foster as equivalent values - individual self-fulfilment with commitment to the greater collective good; self-effacing sharing and caring with fierce competitiveness; environmentalism with consumerism; altruism with self-absorbtion; childhood innocence with a television-fuelled consciousness of society's dangers and horrors that spilled over into classroom conversations among six year olds on child abuse and the relative merits in judicial

execution of gas, the bullet, lethal injection and the electric chair. Meanwhile, in the world outside the school individualism competed with the traditional American commitment to communal consciousness and local decision-making; and patriotism grappled with anti-statism. Such tensions were manifested at every level from formal educational goals to the everyday discourse of teachers and children.

In those classrooms where the ambiguities and unresolved dissonances of American elementary pedagogy were most marked, negotiated pedagogy was compromised by the imperative of transmission, not always admitted and sometimes in disguise. Developmental facilitation and readiness competed with the clock and the sheer impossibility of allowing the degree of divergence of student work patterns and learning outcomes that this belief logically dictates. Physically, classrooms might speak of considerable ambiguity of purpose. With their mix of desks, blackboards, easy chairs, table lamps, carpets and flags it was not clear whether they were places of work, play, rest, relaxation or worship. And though invariably organised for collaborative group work the centre of gravity veered between the group the class and the individual. The celebration of choice, autonomy and self-discipline sat not always comfortably with the imposed rules and routines which most teachers find essential. Grouping encouraged talk, but the generic learning activities were dominated by individual tasks involving reading and writing. Talk was overwhelmingly conversational in structure, syntax and lexis, and had a casual surface ambience, but was often managed as a kind of recitation teaching and was therefore not conversation at all, and communicative rights veered between the negotiated and the imposed. On the other hand such talk lacked the structure and follow-through of recitation at its most effective. The espoused Brunerian commitment to scaffolded dialogue foundered on the rock of the belief that every child must have his or her say, so interactions tended to be brief, random and frequently interrupted. In any case, the purposes of such interactions were often social more than cognitive, about acquiring confidence more than learning to think (like other pairings these, emphatically, are not mutually exclusive).

And so we could go on. In contrast, most of the lessons observed in France and Russia displayed somewhat greater clarity of purpose, procedural coherence and above all consistency in message. Where different values and ideas were simultaneously espoused, they usually managed to reinforce rather than subvert each other. But also, and crucially – as, in both countries, in the area of the treatment of ethnic minorities - value issues and conflicts might be concealed under a blanket of imposed consensus.

I see this situation as not simply a case of 'Why no pedagogy?' For this is the country of 83,000 governments,[30] whose constitution requires education to be decentralised; and it is the country whose history and political ideology shout plurality and diversity. Perhaps the problems of both pedagogic discourse and classroom practice are in part the price which American educators must pay for democracy, pluralism and the tenth amendment of their constitution, as well as for the much vaunted celebration of individualism and personal freedom. Perhaps, too, as Berliner and Biddle have pointed out, the problems relate to the massive disparities in finance, policy and provision between states and districts, and the way that teachers' roles, already broader and more diffuse than in many other countries, have somehow to combine instruction with socialisation, community enlightenment and indeed social reform.[31] Within the classroom, it was clear, the aggregation of instructional and social purposes, and the many tensions within and between these, could yield patterns of organisation and teaching which were exceptionally complex and professionally demanding.

Yet by the same pluralist token, nothing is inevitable. Cutting through all this were other teachers who displayed clarity of purpose and coherence of practice of a kind which was no less American. Thus, one teacher neatly manifested a commitment to individualised, collaborative *and* collective pedagogy by getting her six-year old students to move the furniture – sometimes several times in a

day – between three dispositions: separate tables for individual assignments, combined tables for collaborative group work, and all the tables in a horseshoe for whole class activity. These moves, by dint of training and habit, took just 90 calm seconds to achieve, and the deeper layers of her teaching – lesson structure, task design, assessment and above all the quality of the classroom talk which she fostered – all displayed the same clarity and coherence. Not surprisingly, our video and transcript discourse analyses showed that she, together with several teachers in France and Russia, came closest to realising the goal on which much psychological and pedagogical research converges: dialogic teaching in pursuit of scaffolded learning.

This teacher explained her approach in both principled and pragmatic terms. Her range of educational goals included fostering children's capacities to work individually, collaboratively and collectively. Though she did not express the matter thus, her ideas and practices convincingly manifested the principle that in teaching - returning to our earlier model - *frame* (in this case classroom and student organisation) *form* (lesson structure and sequence) and *act* (task, activity and mode of interaction) must be precisely aligned both with each other and a lesson's objectives, achieving what in England is termed 'fitness for purpose'[32].

But this example raises another and more sensitive issue. For when I described this teacher's work to an American colleague, he immediately and correctly, without further clues, identified the teacher as African American. This, I think should prompt us to consider how far the more acute pedagogical ambiguities and dissonances which our research uncovered in this country are a function of specific kinds of socialisation and consciousness rather than a general condition of American society. The case should also encourage those with an interest in comparative pedagogy to look as closely at - and learn from - differences *within* cultures as between them.[33]

Once we move beyond the simple nostrums of comparative school effectiveness research which in its adulation for teaching practices elsewhere largely ignores culture or at best treats it as just another variable to be number-crunched, and indeed - as Berliner and Biddle remind us with respect to the claimed superiority of Japanese education over American - rarely engages either with the downside of what it urges us to emulate,[34] we come to a more qualified conclusion. Yes, there is much that we can learn from education elsewhere, but this example from a Michigan elementary school suggests that the answers may be closer to home than we think.

Whether we compare locally, nationally or internationally, the matter of values must be kept centre-stage. We know that it is a mistake to presume that we can wrench a policy or practice from its context of values and transplant it as it stands; or that we can change teaching without attending to the values underpinning the practice which we seek to transform. If individualism, freedom, choice, community, affectivity, caring, sharing, discovery, negotiation and reflexive knowledge are important, relevant and valid, as many in the United States insist, then they can't simply be swept aside in pursuit of something called 'effectiveness'. The values must be engaged with in the same spirit of seriousness as the observable practice.

We must look no less carefully at the values which inform the practices elsewhere which impress us. Thus, the oral pedagogy of Russian classrooms, with its carefully structured and sequenced lessons, its brisk yet somehow unhurried management of time and pace, and its heavy emphasis on public and dialogic talk in a whole class context, achieves its undoubted efficiency - albeit across a relatively narrow spectrum of objectives - by being part of a package which includes central prescription on curriculum, deference to the authority of the teacher, a belief in knowledge as given rather than negotiable, a commitment to rules and regulation in the domains of knowledge, language and behaviour, a belief in collectivism emblematised in the class and the idea that its members should progress together rather than be encouraged to diverge, and allegiance to the Vygotskian principle of

education as accelerated development. Similarly, the drive and precision of the dialogue which many admire in French classrooms is rooted in an unquestioning belief that *les disciplines* are central to a notion of what it is to be educated and indeed civilised, and that it is they, rather than children's 'natural' modes of understanding, which should dictate the structure of lessons and of learning tasks and activities If it is felt that US teachers could profitably emulate teaching of the kind which one can observe in these two countries, then a lot more than classroom practice will need to change.

Aside from those supposedly quintessential American values like individualism, community, freedom and choice, two highly influential strands of more specifically *educational* thinking surfaced and re-surfaced in the Michigan teacher interviews and to some extent in the English ones. One, shorthanded earlier as 'teaching as negotiation', was democratic pedagogy (sharing, negotiation, choice, enquiry, reflexive knowledge); the other ('teaching as facilitation') was developmentalism (individualism, readiness, activity, manipulation of materials). The Piagetian legacy seems to be as deeply-rooted as the Deweyan one, notwithstanding all the talk of constructivism, partly I suspect because it fits the wider ideology. For all that the US now has a substantial Vygotskian industry, there is no disguising the fact that the principle that education outpaces development is diametrically opposed to the Anglo-American principle of readiness, and that Vygotsky's Marxian goal of taking the child from the 'natural' to the 'cultural' line of development sits at best uncomfortably with the rhetoric of personal knowledge, critical pedagogy and cultural reproduction. These are the kinds of issue which must be sorted out first.

I suggested at the beginning of this paper that in England there is now no shortage of pedagogic research but as yet no coherent pedagogy in Simon's sense of an empirically and ethically grounded theory of teaching. We need, then to differentiate *descriptive* and *prescriptive* pedagogies.

But cross-cutting these there are *pragmatic* and *political* pedagogies. Indeed in England, now that the UK government has all but completed its takeover of pedagogy – first, under Thatcher, by prescribing a national curriculum and now, under Blair, by prescribing teaching methods and ensuring that the whole is tightly policed by national school inspectors – this is the prevailing mix, and while academics can and do extend their pedagogical descriptions and analyses, the scope for applying these to the development of grounded pedagogical principles becomes ever more restricted. For the UK government now advances as the sole touchstone for what it calls 'best practice' not those ethical and empirical concerns which ought to lie at the heart of pedagogical discourse in a democracy, but the deceptively simple nostrum 'what works'. The message is clear: government takes care of values, teachers put them into practice. This, then, is the old theory-practice divide redefined by centralisation. Disingenuously, the UK government also insists that practice should be 'evidence-based' but clearly the evidence, to be acceptable, must fit the policy. 'What works' seamlessly and shamelessly privileges the pragmatic and political in the guise of respecting the empirical. In fact, evidence is the first casualty of this approach, while ethical considerations are nowhere in view.[35]

In the United States, too, there is no shortage of descriptive pedagogies, Moreover, the effort to devise a grounded prescriptive pedagogy, or a coherent and principled practical theory of teaching, stretches both backwards and forwards from Jerome Bruner's seminal and tellingly-entitled *Toward a Theory of Instruction*[36]. But we may not be there yet, and one reason may be the complexity of the value questions which, in this almost aggressively plural society, remain unreconciled. Another, of course, is the way the Tenth Amendment prevents even authoritarian federal governments from stepping in and imposing their own solutions, though this is a gap which state governments have been increasingly inclined to plug. It is perhaps symptomatic of the American educational condition that over the years during which I have served on the editorial board of *Teaching and Teacher Education*, most of whose contributors are American, there have been many more articles on teachers' values and

beliefs than empirical accounts of learning and teaching, and very few indeed which have sought to reconcile values, beliefs, evidence, learning and teaching within a principled pedagogy.

Perhaps, in this particular country, that is how it has to be. French pedagogy manifests collective beliefs about language, culture, knowledge, identity and civic responsibility largely through collective methods. Russian pedagogy marries four main legacies: the pre-Soviet and Soviet idea of *vospitanie* (personal, social, moral and civic upbringing); ideas from Soviet psychology about human development, learning and the relationship between thought, language and culture; post Soviet humanist curricular values; and the much older Comenian tradition of highly structured, graduated and predominantly oral teaching. I defined pedagogy at the start of this paper as the performance of teaching *together with* the purposes, values, ideas, assumptions, theories and beliefs which inform it. An American pedagogy, we must therefore accept, generates its principles by addressing the values, conflicts and all, which go with the territory, not by wishing they would go away. As those who planned this AERA session imply, a dualist, dichotomising pedagogy is no answer, least of all in a country which purports to defend individual voices, no matter how many there be. Nor, clearly, is an imposed monolithic one. A pedagogy which is both pluralist and consensual, individualist and collective, local and national, is of course a much tougher proposition. But out there are teachers who have achieved it.

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14 For example, Reynolds, D., Farrell, S. (1996) *Worlds Apart? A review of international surveys of educational achievement involving England*, London: TSO; Stevenson, H.W. and Stigler, JW. (1992) *The Learning Gap: why our schools are failing and what we can learn from Japanese and Chinese education*, New York: Simon and Schuster; Clarke, P. (2001) *Teaching and Learning: the Culture of pedagogy*. New Delhi: Sage.

15 See Alexander, *Culture and Pedagogy*, pp 320-5.

16 The framework is developed and applied in *Culture and Pedagogy*, pp 267-528.

17 The six 'versions of teaching' can be compared with Bruner's four 'models of learners' minds' in Bruner, J.S. (1996) *The Culture of Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

18 Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

19 Alexander, *Culture and Pedagogy*, pp 423-6.

20 (Note added in April 2003). This analysis preceded by some years Donald Rumsfeld's excoriation of the contrary political allegiances of 'old' and 'new' Europe in the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Since that conflict, the use of geographical-cultural pedagogic descriptors such as 'Western' or 'Asian' seems even more problematic.

21 Alexander, *Culture and Pedagogy*, pp 169-172 and 310-1. See also Alexander, R.J. (2001) 'Border Crossings: towards a comparative pedagogy', *Comparative Education*, 37(4), pp 507-623.

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27 *The Teaching Gap*, pp 87-8.

28 Kathryn Anderson-Levitt ('Teaching culture as national and transnational' *Educational Researcher*, 31:3, pp 19-21) uses the idea of hybrid across space, to show how the local is embedded in the transnational. I use it here to connote a historical process. In fact, as *Culture and Pedagogy* demonstrates by reference to the underpinning ideas of all five education systems, the continuities are both temporal and spatial. Anderson-Levitt is also highly critical of the 'teaching script' idea.

29 I first set out the 'hybrid' account of change and continuity in English primary education in Alexander, R.J. (1984) *Primary Teaching*, London: Cassell. The idea was developed in Alexander, R.J. (1995) *Versions of Primary Education*, London: Routledge, chapters 2 and 6.

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33 See, for instance: Ladson-Billings, G. (1991) *The Dreamkeepers: successful teachers of African-American Children*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; Foster, M. (1997) *Black Teachers on Teaching*, New York: The New Press.

34 *The Manufactured Crisis*, pp 1-2. Here and elsewhere in their study Berliner and Biddle illustrate the one-sidedness of some American accounts of Japanese education.

35 Alexander, R.J. (1997) *Policy and Practice in Primary Education*, London: Routledge, pp 267-87, develops the idea that notions of 'good practice' must attend to and reconcile conceptual, ethical, empirical, pragmatic and political considerations imperatives. The UK government's 2003 strategy for primary education (DfES 2003, *Excellence and Enjoyment*, London: Department for Education and Skills) provides a good example of the sleight of hand described here.

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